

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

Please cancel claim 19, without prejudice. Kindly amend claims 17 and 20, as shown below. Claims 1-16 and 23-27 have been withdrawn.

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the Application:

**Claim 1 (withdrawn):** A process for the production of malt beverages, wherein an isomerized  $\alpha$ -acids containing composition is added to a wort, the improvement wherein the isomerized  $\alpha$ -acids containing composition comprises a mixture of the alkali metal salts of reduced (*rho*-) iso- $\alpha$ -acids,  $\beta$ -acids, hop oil and water, said composition being added to the wort during brewing.

**Claim 2 (withdrawn):** The process of claim 1, wherein a portion of said mixture is added to the wort early in a boil, and a portion of said mixture is added to the wort in a later stage of a boil.

**Claim 3 (withdrawn):** The process of claim 1, wherein said mixture comprises between about 20 weight percent and 50 weight percent reduced (*rho*-) iso- $\alpha$ -acids, between about 5 weight percent and about 30 weight percent  $\beta$ -acids, and between about 1 volume/weight percent and about 15 volume/weight percent of hop oil.

**Claim 4 (withdrawn):** The process of claim 3, wherein said mixture comprises between about 35 and 45 weight percent *rho*-iso- $\alpha$ -acids, between about 15 and 20 weight percent  $\beta$ -acids, between about 5 and 8 volume/weight percent hop oil, and the balance comprising primarily water and hop-derived fats, waxes and uncharacterized hop resins.

**Claim 5 (withdrawn):** The process of claim 2, wherein between about 10 and 50 weight percent of said mixture is added to the wort late in said boil.

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**Claim 6 (withdrawn):** The process of claim 2, wherein between about 20 and 40 weight percent of said mixture is added to the wort late in said boil.

**Claim 7 (withdrawn):** The process of claim 1, wherein said hop oil is a fraction obtained from hops or hop extracts and contains a compound selected from the group consisting of myrcene, caryophyllene, farnesene, humulene, an epoxide, linalool and humulene-2-ol, and a mixture of one or more thereof.

**Claim 8 (withdrawn):** A process for the production of malt beverages, wherein a hops derived bittering agent is added to a wort or beer, the improvement wherein the bittering agent comprises reduced (*rho*-) iso- $\alpha$ -acids in their primarily alkali metal salts form in a *rho*-iso- $\alpha$ -acids concentration exceeding about 40 weight percent and in which the remainder of the composition is primarily water.

**Claim 9 (withdrawn):** The process of claim 8, wherein the said concentration of *rho*-iso- $\alpha$ -acids is between about 45 weight percent and about 75 weight percent.

**Claim 10 (withdrawn):** The process of claim 9, wherein the concentration of *rho*-iso- $\alpha$ -acids is about 60 weight percent.

**Claim 11 (withdrawn):** The process of Claim 8 in which the alkali metal is potassium.

**Claim 12 (withdrawn):** A composition for flavoring malt beverages, comprising a mixture of reduced (*rho*-) iso- $\alpha$ -acids, primarily in their alkali metal salts form, hop oil,  $\beta$ -acids and water.

**Claim 13 (withdrawn):** The composition of claim 12, wherein said reduced (*rho*-) iso- $\alpha$ -acids are present in an amount between about 20 weight percent and about 50 weight percent, said  $\beta$ -acids are present in an amount between about 10 weight percent and about 30 weight percent,

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and said hop oil is present in an amount between about 1 volume/weight percent and about 15 volume/weight percent.

**Claim 14 (withdrawn):** The composition of claim 13, comprising between about 35 and 45 weight percent of said *rho*-iso- $\alpha$ -acids, between about 15 and 20 weight percent of said  $\beta$ -acids, between about 5 and 8 volume/weight percent of said hop oil, and the balance comprising primarily hop derived fats, waxes, uncharacterized resins and water.

**Claim 15 (withdrawn):** The composition of claim 12, wherein said hop oil is a fraction obtained from hops or hop extracts and contains a compound selected from the group consisting of myrcene, caryophyllene, farnesene, humulene, an epoxide, linalool and humulene-2-ol, and a mixture of one or more thereof.

**Claim 16 (withdrawn):** A bitter, hops-derived composition for flavoring malt beverages, the improvement wherein said composition contains reduced (*rho*-) iso- $\alpha$ -acids in their primarily alkali metal salts form in a concentration (of *rho*-iso- $\alpha$ -acids themselves) exceeding about 40 weight percent.

**Claim 17 (currently amended):** A process for forming a stable, high solids content, partially aqueous composition containing reduced (*rho*-) iso- $\alpha$ -acids, comprising the step of mixing steps of heating a concentrated solution of reduced (*rho*-) iso- $\alpha$ -acids in their free acid form to fluid state, and adding a concentrated aqueous alkali metal hydroxide solution and to said heated solution of reduced (*rho*-) iso- $\alpha$ -acids in their free acid form, with stirring, to form a concentrated solution containing the an alkali metal salt of said reduced (*rho*-) iso-alpha-acids.

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**Claim 18 (original):** The process of claim 17, wherein said concentrated aqueous alkali hydroxide solution is added to said reduced (*rho*-) iso- $\alpha$ -acids stepwise until a substantially neutral or slightly alkaline pH is attained.

**Claim 19 (cancelled)**

**Claim 20 (currently amended):** The process of claim ~~[[19]]~~ 17, further comprising the step of cooling said resulting, concentrated aqueous solution of the alkali metal salts of reduced (*rho*-) iso- $\alpha$ -acids to room temperature.

**Claim 21 (original):** The process of claim 17, wherein said concentrated alkali metal hydroxide solution comprises potassium hydroxide.

**Claim 22 (original):** The process of claim 21, wherein said potassium hydroxide comprises a saturated aqueous solution containing about 45 weight percent potassium hydroxide.

**Claim 23 (withdrawn):** A light stable composition of an alkali metal salt of reduced (*rho*-) iso- $\alpha$ -acids having a concentration of reduced (*rho*-) iso- $\alpha$ -acids of at least about 40% by weight.

**Claim 24 (withdrawn):** The composition of claim 23, wherein said alkali metal comprises potassium.

**Claim 25 (withdrawn):** The composition of claim 24, wherein said composition comprises about 60% by weight of reduced (*rho*-) iso- $\alpha$ -acids, the balance comprising mostly water.

**Claim 26 (withdrawn):** Malt beverages brewed by the addition of the composition of Claim 23 to wort.

**Claim 27 (withdrawn):** Malt beverages brewed by the addition of the composition of Claim 23 to beer, either with or without the prior addition of water.

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